

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D C 20505

21 September 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable William P. Clark
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT: A Provocation Contingency in Lebanon:
Intensified Attacks on Marine Positions
to Force U.S. Air and Naval Strikes

1. A few reports over the last several weeks culminating in one received yesterday [redacted] suggest that Assad may have, or believe that he has, assurances of active Soviet support if the Syrian armed forces come under attack. We think it unlikely the Soviets would permit themselves to be involved in heavy hostilities so far away from home without any adequate air bases. Still, it is possible that the Soviets may be encouraging Assad to provoke us into hostilities which they would perceive as damaging to our interests in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world.

25X1

2. In this context, I send you a "think piece" by one of our officers whose job it is to keep his eyes open for less likely but dangerous contingencies. It argues that Assad and his Soviet advisors may want to escalate in Lebanon to damage United States relations with Arab and Moslem governments and America's Middle East position generally to aggravate what they see as tenuous public support for Reagan policies, and to damage our credibility in Europe and generally in the world. The objectives and methods of involving us further are suggested in detail in the four-page memorandum which is attached.

3. My own view is that Moscow would like to suck us in on the ground but will be careful not to get themselves directly involved, and that Syria is likely to back down if we continue to attack their position in Lebanon from the sea and the air.

William J. Casey

Attachment a/s

25X1

SECRET